

May 8, 2019

Dear President Austin and President-Elect Folt,

We are writing to express our concerns about the past week's announcements regarding important developments at USC.

First, the steps taken to reform the admissions process for prospective student-athletes are insufficient and disappointing. In the process of review of applications that you outline, the first two levels are within the athletic department and involve no external oversight. There is no role for the faculty, who are in charge of the university's educational mission, and no provision for upholding academic standards. Finally, your letter focused very narrowly on tinkering with the athletic admissions process and reviewing students who may have been improperly admitted to the university. What is needed, to avoid future scandals like this and others that have plagued the Athletic Department in recent years, is a wide-ranging discussion, led by the faculty, on the role of athletics at a major university and its relation to USC's core mission of the pursuit of truth and knowledge. Only then can we set reasonable standards for admission of student athletes. There must also be continuing and meaningful faculty-led oversight of the Athletic Department, as well as an examination of the admissions process as a whole.

Second, we have received painful, public, and potentially institution-threatening news about the sexual assault that led to the ACGME withdrawing accreditation of USC's Cardiovascular Medicine program. Additionally, the ACGME placed our institutions, USC/LAC+USC, on Probationary Accreditation due to similar concerns about resident safety. Despite complaints and demands for redress from faculty and residents at the medical school, the leaders who overlooked the reported sexual assault continue to be in positions of authority, and nothing has changed to create a climate of equality and accountability. Failure to respond clearly, ethically and publicly, could result in further loss of accreditation for medical school programs and further derail USC's path forward at this critical juncture.

Finally, major announcements have been made regarding new senior leadership, and in particular, the search for a new provost, with little or no meaningful faculty consultation. The search for a new president marked a high point in accountability and transparency at USC, yet it seems as though the lessons learned this year are already being forgotten. Rather than canvassing the faculty for search committee nominations, consulting with the most active groups of concerned faculty across campus and with the full Senate, or even drawing on the lists prepared from faculty nominations for the presidential search, a Provost Search Committee was formed with only the input of the outgoing and incoming presidents of the Senate, who are neither elected by nor accountable to the full faculty. Even more than the president of a university, the provost is the leader of the faculty and should be chosen through an inclusive process in which a wide range of faculty voices are heard.

As we look to the future, we seek to create genuinely open conversations with the administration of USC, along with staff, students and other community members, with a clear sense that faculty are the keepers of the flame that illuminates higher education. At this moment, one of USC's powerful claims to high regard in the world of higher education is that its faculty spoke up for

the integrity of the university and the centrality of academic enterprises of teaching and learning. We expect nothing less from USC going forward, and we intend to continue to offer models of transparency, accountability, and faculty governance.

The revelations in the May 8 edition of the Los Angeles Times of the serious problems in the School for Social Work graphically illustrate the pervasiveness of administrative failures at USC: the lack of administrative oversight; the tendency to secrecy and cover-up; the sacrifice of academic quality to the pursuit of money; the refusal to listen to faculty voices warning of trouble over the last several years; and the increasing reliance on non-tenure-track faculty with no job protections when budgets are cut. The steep decline of the School of Social Work in rankings, and the fact that a stunning 40% of the students had to be admitted conditionally because they could not meet the university's minimal admission standards, demonstrate the catastrophic impact these problems can have on academic quality. Strong faculty governance could have helped avoid all of these problems.

We therefore propose:

- Appointment of a major committee with strong faculty representation to review the place of athletics at USC and to set standards for admitting student-athletes and enabling them to succeed as students first and athletes second;
- The reconstitution of the Provost's Oversight Committee for Athletics with access to all necessary information and the power to review the applications of prospective and current student-athletes, identify potential concerns, and initiate measures to address them;
- Listening sessions between the Provost Search Committee and faculty, as well as students and staff, as were held by the Presidential Search Committee;
- A transparent, faculty-led investigation into the longstanding and continuing problems of sexual harassment, assault, and gender discrimination at the medical school (and elsewhere at the university), which will hold accountable those administrators who failed to protect patients, students, and faculty from harm.
- Creating a new University Council (similar to those found at many institutions: e.g., Columbia, Cornell, Duke, Penn, Princeton, and Stanford) to hold regularly scheduled public meetings that include central administration, and faculty, student, and staff leadership, and that would address all important proposed policy initiatives, and make recommendations to the administration before policies are enacted.

Sincerely yours,

Concerned Faculty of USC